

REMARKS

Claims 9-19 are pending. Claim 9 has been amended. The amendment is fully supported by the specification, e.g., FIG. 3 and pages 12-14. No new matter has been presented

Claims 9 and 13-14 stand rejected under 35 USC 103 as being unpatentable over Yoshida, U.S. Patent No. 6,388,759, in view of Fukuda, Japanese Patent Application No. 2002-023564. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 9, as amended, recites “a controller that *determines an automatic-clear time* for the input apparatus on which the input operation was performed based on the *level of ease of use associated with the input apparatus*” (emphasis added). This feature is not taught or suggested by the combination of Yoshida and Fukuda.

Fukuda, which the Examiner relies upon as allegedly teaching the claimed controller, does not determine an automatic-clear time for the input apparatus on which the input operation was performed. The Examiner states that Fukuda ties a desired clearing time to a specific function selected by the user. However, just because the user in Fukuda uses a specific input unit (i.e, a touch panel or a key pad) to specify the clearing time, the function does not inherently tie the specified clearing time to the input unit. There is no suggestion in Fukuda that the once the automatic-clear time has been inputted from one of the input unit, it continues to be associated with that input unit. In other words, once the user enters the automatic-clear time from either the touch panel or the key pad, there is no teaching or suggestion that the automatic-clear time is set for that input unit specifically or that the user is able to set a different automatic-clear time for each of the input units.

In addition, unlike the claimed invention, Fukura’s controller does not *determine* the automatic-clear time, even if the inputted automatic-clear time were considered to be tied with a specific function or the input unit. The Examiner in fact admits on page 2 of the Office Action that in Fukura, the user “sets a desired clearing time” for a function such as double-sided copy setting.

Thus, regardless of how the desired clearing time is used by Fukura, it is the user, not the controller that determines the automatic-clearing time.

Fukuda also fails to teach or suggest an automatic-clear time being determined *based on the level of ease of use* associated with the input apparatus. Specifically, there is no suggestion or teaching in Fukuda that the user's choice of the automatic clearing time is in any way based on a level of ease of use associated with the input unit. Accordingly, Fukuda fails to overcome the deficiencies of Yoshida in teaching the features of claim 9.

Accordingly, claim 9 is allowable. Claims 13-14 depend from claim 9 and are also allowable.

Claims 9-12 and 16 stand rejected under 35 USC 103 as being unpatentable over Yoshida in view of Hirota, U.S. Patent No. 5,546,166. Claims 17-19 stand rejected under 35 USC 103 as being unpatentable over Yoshida in view Hirota and further in view of "well known art". These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Hirota, which the Examiner relies upon as allegedly teaching the claimed controller, does not teach or suggest the claimed "controller that *determines an automatic-clear time* for the input apparatus on which the input operation was performed based on the *level of ease of use associated with the input apparatus*," as recited in claim 9 (emphasis added).

Hirota teaches setting two different auto clear times, one for each of the two guidance displays which can be displayed (col. 5, lines 10-19). Despite the Examiner's assertion that col. 3, line 35 to col. 5, line 65 of Hirota discloses auto-clear times being determined for each of the plurality of input apparatuses, Applicants find no such teaching in Hirota. In fact, FIG. 5 of Hirota makes clear that the auto clear timer T1 or T2 are set for the different guidance displays 1 and 2, and are unrelated to the input device used by the user.

In addition, Hirota fails to teach or suggest an automatic-clear time being determined *based on the level of ease of use* associated with the input apparatus. In fact, there is no teaching or

suggestion that Hirota determines the auto clear timer T1 or T2 based on any characteristics of the input apparatus at all. Accordingly, Hirota fails to overcome the deficiencies of Yoshida in teaching the features of claim 9.


Accordingly, claim 9 is allowable. Claims 10-12 and 16 depend from claim 9 and are similarly allowable.

The remaining claims are allowable at least due to their respective dependencies. Applicants request that these rejections be withdrawn.

In the event the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office determines that an extension and/or other relief is required, applicants petition for any required relief including extensions of time and authorize the Commissioner to charge the cost of such petitions and/or other fees due in connection with the filing of this document to **Deposit Account No. 03-1952** referencing docket no. **325772033200**.

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